

Montana Transportation Partnership
February 2, 2005 10:00 A.M.
301 South Park, Conference Room 226
Helena, MT

Members and Guests Present:

Lena Belcourt, Office of the Governor
Doug Blakley, Senior Long Term Care-Aging
Beverly Berg, Montana Vocational Rehabilitation/Blind and Low
Vision Services
Paula Cull, Montana State University-Billings
Marlene Disburg, Department of Public Health Human Services,
Director's Office
Steve Earle, Mountain Line
Walt Hanley, Helena Area Transit Assoc.
Bev Hardy, Living Independently For Today and Tomorrow
Jim Helgeson, Great Falls Transit District
Lyn Hellegaard, Montana Transit Association
June Hermanson, State Independent Living Council
Mike Hermanson, MSU-Billings Contract
Donald Jones, Montana Advocacy Program
David Kack, Western Transportation Institute
Kris Kleinschmidt, ASI/North Central Independent Living Services
Bob Lawson, Montana Council On Developmental Disabilities
Bob Maffit, Montana Independent Living Project
Mike Mayer, Summit Independent Living Centers (by phone)
Susie McIntyre, 211
Tom Steyaert, Montana Department Of Transportation, Transit
Section
Arlene Temple, Salish Kootenai Social Services
Michelle Thibodeau, Disability Determination Services

The meeting was called to order by Marlene Disburg, Chair. Marlene introduced Lena Belcourt who was recently appointed as the Governor as a Coordinator for Disability Services. Lena described the Governor's vision for the state as wanting to be sure that Montana is for all Montanans, 17% of Montanans have a disability.

David Kack and Susie McIntyre (via phone) described the 211 project. Susie submitted on behalf of the Montana 211 Community Coalition and MTP a Stage 1 Research Problem Statement for the 211 project. The proposal addressed the problem of transportation information being scattered and difficult to access within all communities in the state. The project would determine how best to integrate transportation information into the 211 system.

Susie also provided background information on the 211 system. The Federal Communication Commission set aside the phone # 211 for health and human service referrals - similar to 911. In Montana, they expect the 211 number to do 2 different things: 1. On a day to day basis it will provide health and human services referrals available in the state utilizing a system with a statewide database and regional call centers. 2) In a disaster, 211 will hopefully take a lot of pressure off the 911 number by being the place people call when they need information rather than emergency help.

David described what would happen if the Research Problem proposal were funded. What other states are doing would be reviewed, then options on a variety of issues would be explored, and protocols would be developed and implemented. Also, how 511 and 211 might work together would be explored. David also discussed that information technology issues would be a major element of the work involved.

Bob Maffit and Lena Belcourt noted that it should be on the record that the Partnership supports the fact that people with disabilities should be involved in the decision making process to choose a consultant for the 211 project.

Next the report on the Missoula/Ravalli County project report was given by Mike Mayer. He reported that progress had been difficult for the project due to barriers resulting from the Public Service Commission's regulatory authority. The regulatory authority issues had interfered with plans for the Bitterroot Bus's efforts at coordination. However, this could be changed if House Bill 273 is passed into law and passage is progressing well. There is a fixed route system being established within Hamilton and the project will be promoting this at the Hamilton Spring Fair. Lynn Hellegaard also added some information related to coordination of Bitterroot Bus with the Missoula system. This is difficult because of restrictions on crossing the county line. She also mentioned that there is a request into the Public Service Commission by Bitterroot Bus to get a class A license, but this is being protested.

David Kack reinforced the discussion that problems with the Public Service Commission interfered with a number of the plans in Ravalli County.

Mike Hermanson indicated that there was some planning regarding the getting a transportation district in Ravalli County and that would be a significant source of funding to sustain the initiative that Ravalli County have initiated through the Partnership contract.

Marlene noted that Joanne Perkins has been a tireless advocate for transportation services in Ravalli County.

Next Arlene Templer gave a report on the activities on the Flathead Reservation. Arlene has recently changed positions moving from the Vocational Rehabilitation

Section 121 project to the Social Services Division. She reported on the grant from APRIL that the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes received through the Partnership. About 21 people receive services. This is primarily a voucher system project. They also are the recipient of the TransADE Grant and a Capital Assistance Grant. TransADE funding helps to operate the vans that run to the north and south ends of the Reservation. She also discussed a number of collaborations with Salish Kootenai College, Job Corps, and the Community Transportation Association of America.

Next was a report on the United We Ride proposal. Mike reported that word came that the proposal was accepted, but there were additional steps to get the funding. A proposal needs to be submitted through a specific system operated by the Department of Transportation (national). There had been some discussions with a Department of Transportation representative out of Denver and he was going to try to work things out with the Governor's office as they were the applicant. Mike handed out a set of timelines on the related to the Community Assessment Meetings that would lead up to the United We Ride proposal activities.

Marlene reported there was a meeting in Denver and an action plan developed (copies were handed out). The first goal related to a research study to assess transportation resources available in a variety of state agencies. Marlene has pulled together significant amounts of information related to the transportation resources within DPHHS and this information has been shared with MDOT. There was some discussion related to how what has been gathered related to the MDOT research plans. WTI will also be involved in the process although the exact scope of work has not been defined. There was discussion related to how what DPHHS has already gathered fits with what MDOT is interested in gathering and also discussion that gathering the information was only part of the process, that analysis of the data was also important. While DPHHS and MDOT have done a lot with regard to the research already, there remain a number of departments with various transportation resources that still need to be approached.

Because he would have to leave soon, Walt Hanley gave the report on the Helena demonstration site. He reported there have been several meetings related to the project's sustainability plan which focuses on shifting some programs to HATS, which creates the opportunity for more matching funds, this allows for funding to continue the East Helena route. Some programs will be continued through HATS contracting with Rocky Mountain for services. There are still some negotiations going on, but things are progressing well.

The East Helena service has produced terrific results. November had 493 rides, 479 in December, and 652 in January. Walt is also impressed with the coordination that has evolved between all concerned. They are also looking at other possible new routes.

Following the report, discussion returned to United We Ride activities. Mike gave additional information on the United We Ride Proposal and the fact that the original proposal called for October to October timelines and now things were pushed back to at least March to March and perhaps even further. He reviewed the plan to use ADD money for community meetings to meet the assessment requirement of the United We Ride process. He discussed using Nell Eby and perhaps Cordell Ringel to help recruit Native American populations. It was decided to have the community meetings in Billings, Butte, Bozeman, Wolf Point, Great Falls, Havre, Miles City, the Ronan/Polson/Pablo area, Lewistown, and there will be a second meeting in Billings focusing on BIA representatives and MT/WY Tribal Leader's Subcommittee on Health.

There was then discussion related to a new initiative to have a Transportation Coordinator position in DPHHS, which may be responsible for some of the United We Ride activities. The scope and specific involvement can not be determined at this time due to the newness of the position. This position resulted from a request by the members of the Department's Executive Committee and staff to the new administration and it was accepted readily. The job description is being developed and hopefully the new person will be available for the next meeting of the Partnership. There was discussion related to the pros and cons of the position being in the Governor's office as opposed to DPHHS.

Mike Mayer led a discussion on the proposed Governor's Executive Order. Marlene had requested a report because of there had been no report to the Partnership since the last meeting. He reviewed that at the October meeting the Partnership basically took action to begin work on the draft Executive Order which Marlene has handed out. The decision was that it was a working draft which needed to go to the department heads of the Dept. of Transportation and DPHHS for their input. Once that input was gathered whatever changes might be in order would be incorporated into the draft and then forwarded to the Governor's office.

Since that time, there have been a variety of activities including a letter of concern regarding the Executive Order being sent directly to the Governor and concerns that the Executive Order had already been presented to the Governor and was on the docket for action had been expressed. However, at this time the Executive Order has not been presented to the Governor. Marlene indicated the Executive Order had not been dealt with by the Department Heads due to the change in administration.

At this point, there was discussion related to the Native American representative in the Governor's Executive Order and this included a discussion of the Native American Representative on the Partnership. The consensus seemed to be that the representative should be appointed by the MT/WY Tribal Leaders Council.

Lena brought up that there was a Governor's Council on Disabilities and that it might be a good idea to have a Governor's Council of Human Services and transportation could be part of this. Feedback was that Transportation was big enough for its own Council. Lena said she would take it back.

Discussion then returned to the Council related to the Governor's Executive Order. Mike Hermanson pointed out that one reason for trying to get the Partnership some sort of recognition or status was to be able to carry out activities such as operating grants. Right now the Partnership has to ask others to be the applicant for their grants. When asked to provide an example of how the Council might work, Mike indicated the State Independent Living Council might be an example. There was discussion on the differences between the proposed Council and the State Independent Living Council. There was also discussion on decision making councils and advisory councils.

Then discussion turned to concerns about the Order as written. Concerns expressed were the funding of the Council, the fact that members would have to follow decisions of the council, and that coordination plans needed to be in place before submitting proposals for vehicles.

Bob Maffit moved that comments and concerns about the current draft be made available to Marlene no later than March 2nd. Don Jones seconded the motion. Marlene was to send everything out electronically for comments and questions. The draft was to be labeled by number and date to avoid confusion. No one was opposed.

Marlene indicated that there would not be sufficient time to cover the Long Range Plan or the Policy and Procedures Compliance and they would be covered at the next meeting.

Jim Helgeson agreed to give a presentation on the Great Falls Transit District at the next meeting.

Lyn Hellegaard agreed to report on the insurance pool project at the next meeting.

There was discussion that representatives of the Partnership should be involved in the screening criteria, recruiting and interviewing for the new transportation coordinator position. Michelle Thibodeau moved that the current active Executive Committee be the advisory group to provide the screening criteria of the new FTE position of Transportation Coordinator. Bob Maffit seconded the motion. The motion carried. There was a great deal of discussion related to the motion related to whether there was more activities the advisory group should be involved in and strategies to assure that input was accepted. However, there were no amendments to the motion.

Bob Maffit indicated that if the new Coordinator is hired significantly before the next meeting that a special meeting should be called.

The date of May 4 was tentatively set for the next meeting, there was a need to check some calendars before setting the date firmly.

Bob Maffit made a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting, Bob Larsen seconded. It was noted that MTA and MDOT reserved the right to speak to their superiors prior to approval of the Executive Order. The motion passed with this amendment.

Meeting adjourned.